2015 Presidential Migratory Bird Federal Stewardship Award Nomination

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service: Wellfleet Bay Virus Investigation

Partners: U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Region 5; Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study; U. S. Geological Survey (USGS) National Wildlife Health Center; USGS Alaska Science Center; Biodiversity Research Institute; U. S. National Park Service (NPS) Cape Cod National Seashore; Cornell University Baker Institute for Animal Health College of Veterinary Medicine; MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife.

Photo Credit: Lucas Savoy, Biodiversity Research Institute, Gorham, ME

In support of the One Health concept, and in accordance with Homeland Security Presidential Directives 8 and 9, USDA-APHIS (Wildlife Services) created the National Wildlife Disease Program (NWDP). The NWDP, administered through the National Wildlife Research Center, is the only comprehensive, nationally coordinated system in the United States capable of conducting disease surveillance and emergency response for diseases of concern in wildlife. Over the last 12 years, the NWDP has conducted surveillance for more than 100 pathogens, toxins, and syndromes across the country and the world. Given the unique capabilities of the NWDP, the expertise of its staff, and the extensive collaborations established with the USFWS and other State and Federal Agencies, the Homeland Security Council directed USDA-APHIS to work with the DOI to develop an interagency early detection system for HPAI in wild birds. This system was incorporated into the U.S. National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza. In 2006, USDA-APHIS, DOI, and State wildlife agencies implemented a nationwide surveillance system for HPAI in wild birds, and by 2011, more than 500,000 samples from approximately 260 species were collected and tested. This effort was coordinated with Canada and Mexico through a trilateral working group. Collectively, the North American HPAI surveillance effort represents the largest coordinated wildlife disease surveillance program ever implemented. As a direct result of the collaborations established by the HPAI early detection system, USFWS and APHIS worked together to investigate a seasonally recurring die-off of common eider sea ducks (Somateria mollissima) on Cape Cod, MA beginning in 2008. Occurring in close proximity to a major sea duck over-wintering and migratory staging area in Nantucket Sound, the die-off caused concern about population-level impacts to migratory waterfowl. Additionally, there was concern whether this newly discovered virus could become a threat to poultry and the nation's food supply. Information gained from the many facets of this multi-agency disease investigation contributes to overall management discussions for this crucial species. Information learned from this project may lead to a greater understanding of the disease and development of management methods concerning the transmission of this disease. In addition, information gained from this investigation can be applied to other potential diseases that may appear to be isolated in particular migratory bird or other wildlife species. This investigation provided, and will continue

to provide, USDA-APHIS and USFWS with new insights to better protect staging and over-wintering areas for migratory birds.